

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University
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STUDENT SURVIVAL

BY PAUL CROUCH, E. E., '27

STUDENT survival is analagous to labor turnover, in industry, expense increases when labor turnover increases, and in the educational world, cost increases when the number of students dropping out of school (student fatality) increases. The curve of fatality for five thousand engineering students in twenty-five schools is reproduced here (indicated by the lower and lighter of the two lines). It should be noted that this curve has been made on the basis of no students being admitted to advanced standing, and those who require more than four years to graduate are regarded as having dropped out of school. This curve indicates that the probability of a student completing his freshman work in one year is 61 percent; the probability of his completing freshman and sophomore work in two years is 42 percent; the probability of graduation four years after matriculation is less than 28 percent. It is interesting to compare this fatality curve with that of the engineering class of 1925 at the Ohio State University.

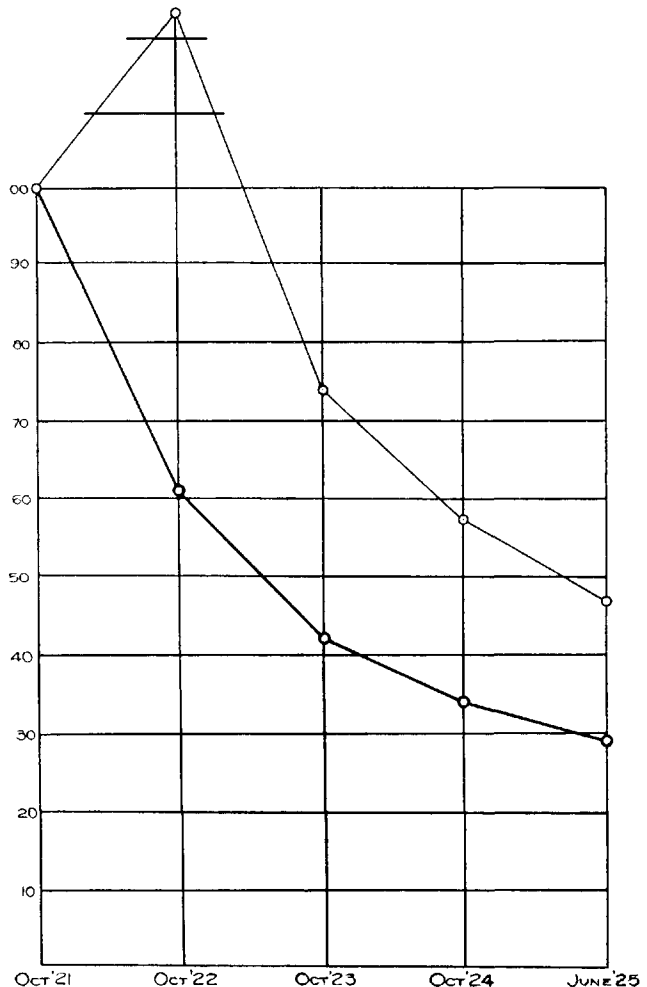
If the number of engineers registered in the fall of 1921 is taken as 100, we had 123 registered as sophomores in the fall of 1922. This situation may be expressed as "negative fatality." Students of the preceding class repeating some or much of their sophomore work, and students admitted to advanced standing from other colleges, universities, and technical schools more than compensate for the number of men not becoming sophomores in one year. We are assured, though, by Professor Wm. T. Magruder of the Mechanical Engineering Department, that this situation is due to the large and increasing number of students admitted to advanced standing far more than it is due to repeater students.

It should be particularly realized that the heavy curve is one of an individual's possibility of reaching the sophomore standing in one year, or junior standing in two years. The light curve is one of the number of men in the class of 1925 from matriculation to graduation.

The most important causes of student fatality are improper preparation, lack of interest, and lack of ability. Unfortunately these items are so closely related that separating them is very much a matter of guess work. These factors and their combinations are responsible for seventy per cent of all student elimination. Students themselves assign to scholastic failure only fifty-four per cent of total elimination. The matter is well explained by Griffitt in his text in Vocational Psychology. In effect he says, "The situation is much the same as when the poor or failing student gives eye trouble or dislike of instructors as the cause of his leaving school. There are students who would rather be discharged for almost any reason than for incompetence, and the defense mechanism of one lacking in moral courage may even result in his deceiving himself." This explains why it is students will give a false reason for leaving school and yet be perfectly sincere and honest about it. Elimination in education for other professions does not seem to be so severe. For Medicine the survival is 76.6% ; for Dentistry, 60.3% ; for Agri-

culture, 54.6%, and for Engineering, 28%, or as it is here at Ohio State for the class of 1925, 53%.

Requirements for admission to engineering schools are quite uniform from school to school, but there is much difference in the way these requirements are enforced. Conditioned students are admitted by some institutions and not even considered by others. The inference to be drawn here is that colleges feel compelled by law or by the spirit of fair play with the High Schools to admit students on condition or they feel that the chances of these students are about equally good with those bringing the full entrance requirements. As a matter of fact, in but one institution did the conditioned men survive as well as the non-conditioned men. A comment on the tendency of High Schools not finishing their job or the college failing to discriminate against unfinished material appeared in the Lantern last month under the title "Why Cervantes Discovered America." This article concluded, "If the college will, it can require fit material for its greater work." When the buck has been passed all the way around, it comes home to the college—not because the college failed to teach the boy better, but because it accepted him before the high school had finished its job.



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